

This Week in Congress

August 27, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Congress will be back in session next Tuesday. This week, I spent time in several communities and enjoyed visiting with many Kansans. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

New Kansas Ethanol Facility Moves Country toward Energy Independence

On Thursday, I joined local and state officials and executives from Abengoa Bioenergy in formally announcing the selection of Hugoton as the site of the first industrial-sized cellulosic ethanol plant to be built in the United States. The \$400 million ethanol production plant will include a 30-million-gallon cellulosic ethanol plant and an 85-million-gallon traditional ethanol plant. The location announcement comes after the Department of Energy awarded Abengoa a \$76 million grant to build the plant in Kansas. The facility is expected to bring more than 100

jobs to the Hugoton area.

Renewable fuels produced in Kansas have become a significant component of our national and energy security, especially as we move away from our reliance on foreign sources of oil. By using things like wheat straw and perennial grasses, cellulosic ethanol allows us to utilize other crops, beyond corn, that are also used for food.

This new plant is a great development for Hugoton and Stevens County, southwest Kansas and our entire state. The opportunity to lead our country in the production of cellulosic ethanol is something all Kansans can be proud of. I congratulate the community and join them in welcoming Abengoa to southwest Kansas. [Click here](#) to read more about the project.

Agriculture Disaster Assistance Sign-up Dates Announced

This week, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced sign-up dates for producers to apply for agriculture disaster assistance passed by Congress this spring. In May, Congress finally recognized the importance of delivering disaster assistance to our hardest hit producers and passed the Agricultural Assistance Act of 2007. This modest assistance covers crop and livestock losses for years 2005 and 2006, as well as for crops planted and livestock losses through February 28, 2007. Eligible ranchers and other livestock producers can apply to receive benefits under the Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) beginning September 10. Eligible farmers can sign-up for the Crop Disaster Program

(CDP) beginning October 15 if they suffered quantity losses to their crops. USDA is expected to soon announce CDP sign-up for quality losses.

In Kansas, we have struggled through five and in some areas six years of drought followed by last year's strong winter storms in December that led to 44 of Kansas' 105 counties being declared natural disasters. Tornadoes, hail and floods have now affected the rest of Kansas. In total, 65 of the 69 counties I represent have been declared federal disaster areas this year. My top priority this year has been to see that the producers in Kansas who have been devastated by extreme weather are given the support needed to stay on their feet and continue feeding our nation. [Click here](#) to listen to me talk about this topic.

For more information, please contact your [local FSA office](#) and visit the FSA's [Disaster Assistance Programs](#) Web page.

Federal Assistance in the Fight against Methamphetamine in Kansas

I was at the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) headquarters in Topeka on Monday to meet with Director Bob Blecha and tour their facilities. Following the tour, Director Blecha and I announced passage of funding by the U.S. House of Representatives for the Rural Kansas Methamphetamine Program to target the importation of meth, as well as funding for ballistic vests to replace outdated gear currently used by KBI personnel. This funding is important for the

KBI to upgrade safety equipment for its agents, as well as to continue the fight against methamphetamine in our communities.

Combating meth in our communities has become an important priority for me. As a member of the Congressional Meth Caucus, I have worked to obtain millions of dollars in federal funding to assist in the prevention of production and the treatment for use of meth in Kansas.

Thanking New President of AT&T Kansas for Support of Greensburg Recovery

Before visiting the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, I had the opportunity to visit with Dan Jacobsen, the new President of AT&T Kansas. Before moving to Kansas, Dan served as Executive Director of Regulatory Affairs for AT&T Nevada. I thanked Dan for the company's donation of \$50,000 to the city Greensburg. After the tornado, AT&T provided emergency communications services to assist storm disaster victims. They also provided Greensburg officials with emergency phone lines and other necessary tools to help in the recovery process. We also discussed the company's plans to improve service and bring advanced technologies to Kansas.

Working to Address Problems at the Kansas Soldiers' Home

This week, I was informed that inspectors from the Kansas Department of Aging found 29 violations in care and operations at the Kansas Soldiers' Home located at Fort Dodge outside of Dodge City. The Soldiers' Home is a state of Kansas owned and operated assisted living facility for veterans.

I am disappointed in these reports of poor care. The veterans who call Fort Dodge home have done a great service for our country and in return they deserve quality long-term care and treatment. I am hopeful the state of Kansas will take aggressive action to correct these problems. That is the least we owe to Kansas' veterans.

I have called on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which provides oversight guidance to the home, to provide any resources available to assist the state in this matter. An inspection team from the Wichita VA Medical Center was dispatched to the facility this week, with an additional team set to arrive soon, to better identify problems and corrective actions for the state to pursue.

Visiting with Folks in Wichita

Thanking Chairman Emeritus of Cessna: In Wichita on Monday, I had the opportunity to visit with Russ Meyer, chairman emeritus of Cessna Aircraft Company. We discussed the Federal Aviation Authorization bill, which is expected to be in the U.S. House of Representatives next month, and the 21st Project in Wichita. Mr. Meyer was the driving force behind this initiative that consists of Cessna's training facility and the newly opened Boys and Girls Club. In 1997, then-President Bill Clinton called the training facility a model for the nation. This past June, President Bush helped celebrate the grand opening of the Boys and Girls Club. Mr. Meyer is a great example of the difference one person can make in the lives of many. I thank him for all he has done and all he continues to do for the Wichita community and state of Kansas.

Visiting Via Christi Hospital: I visited Via Christi Hospital to meet with Ed Harned, Controller of AMS Lab, and Carolyn Smith with Via Christi Government Relations to discuss current issues and legislation affecting clinical laboratory services. The AMS Lab provides testing and information to physicians, hospitals, nursing homes and state agencies in Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri.

Stopping at Wichita Downtown Rotary: While in Wichita, I joined fellow Rotarians for the Wichita Downtown Rotary Club meeting at the Broadview Hotel. Thank you to Tim Witsman, the new President of the Wichita Independent Business Association, for inviting me at the event.

Speaking to Council Grove Rotary

I traveled to Council Grove on Wednesday to speak to the Rotary Club during their meeting at the Hays House Restaurant. I provided an update on activities in Congress and also visited about immigration, President Bush's legacy and my recent teletown hall meetings, which allow me to conduct telephone conference calls with thousands of Kansans while I am in Washington, D.C. Thank you to Vern Hay for including me in the program.

Welcoming New Administrator to Southwest Medical Center in Liberal

While in southwest Kansas on Thursday, I traveled to Liberal to welcome new Administrator Norm Lambert to the Southwest Medical Center. I appreciate Administrator Lambert taking me around the facility and visiting about available services and the need for qualified nurses and physicians in the area. Thanks also to Rozelle Webb with the Chamber of Commerce; my cousin, Susan Zielke, Medical Floor Nurse Manager; and Jo Harrison, Vice President of Patient Care Services, for joining us during the visit.

Viewing Storm Damage in Holcomb

Severe storms came through Finney County last Monday evening and caused significant damage to the high school in Holcomb. I stopped by the high school on Thursday to see the damage and visit with Superintendent Robert O'Conner and Principal Jarrod Stoppel. The main damage was to the roof of the school and from the subsequent rainwater that leaked into the building. Superintendent O'Conner reported that 40 percent of the school is usable and that

they hope to resume classes today. During the visit, I also met with Finney County Commissioner Larry Jones and Finney County Emergency Management Coordinator Cathy Hernandez.

Touring Fort Hays State University's Renovated Memorial Union

Fort Hays State University recently renovated its Memorial Union. On Friday, I toured the facility with Student Body President Chelsey Gillogly, Student Body Vice President Cole Engel and Union Director Bill Smriga. The new union looks great and the space will serve students well for years to come. I appreciated Chelsey, Cole and Bill showing me the renovated space. I wish Chelsey and Cole all the best during their administration of the Student Government Association this year.

Visiting A-1 Plank and Scaffold Manufacturing of Hays

On Friday, I had the opportunity to tour A-1 Plank and Scaffold Manufacturing of Hays. A-1 Plank and Scaffold has been servicing the scaffolding and shoring industry for more than 25 years. Before being elected to Congress, I worked with Midwest Energy of Hays and Ellis County Coalition for Economic Development to recruit A-1 to western Kansas. This company has flourished in Hays and become a great part of the community. The family-owned and operated business employs more than 100 people in the Hays area. Thank you to Dwight Allenbaugh for taking time to provide me a tour. As with every other small business owner,

concerns were expressed about the inability to obtain an adequate work force.

Meeting and Congratulating the 2007 Leadership Kansas Class

I joined this year's Leadership Kansas class for a progressive dinner at the Prairie Museum of Art and History in Colby on Friday evening. I enjoyed visiting with the members of this year's class and providing an update on activities in Washington, D.C. Leadership Kansas is a program that brings together people from all parts of the state and promotes involvement and leadership in our communities. I participated in the 1984 Leadership Kansas class. Thank you to the local folks for their work in hosting the group in Colby - Janice McCart, CEO of Citizens Medical Center; Lon Frahm with Frahm Farmland; Sue Taylor, Director of Prairie Museum of Art and History; and Chuck Moore, accountant with Woofter Construction and Irrigation.

Members of this year's class include: Pat Apple of Louisburg, Michael Armstrong of Fairway, James Behan of Garden City, Ivan Crossland Jr. of Columbus, Glennys Doane of Downs, Lynn Kreider of Colby, Vincent Masilionis and Kevin Yoder of Overland Park, Victor McMullen and Gary Regoli of Derby, James Minnix of Scott City, Heather Morgan of Hoyt, John Novak of Prairie Village, Lynette Olson of Pittsburg, Erin Pogue of Shawnee, Debra Prideaux of Hays, Patricia Rose of Hutchinson, Brenda Sykes McCants of Goodland, and Jacob Wassenberg of Manhattan. State Representative Stephanie Sharp Bruyn, Hannes Zacharias and Sharon Zoellner, all of Lenexa, are also in this year's class. In the group from Wichita are State Senator Donald Betts, Celia Chin, Bradley Clothier, Laurette Lahey, Randall Peterson, Scott Schneider and Denise Sherman. Representing Topeka are Jesse Borjon, Patti Bossert, Alan Conroy, Todd Johnson and David Sollars and in the class from Lawrence are David Corliss, Peggy Loyd, Michael Maddox, Roger Pine, Stanley Rasmussen and Michele Weigand.

In the Office

Dustin Hardison and Patrick Woods of Topeka were in with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services to visit about the services they provide to Kansans. In for a tour of the United States Capitol building were Terry and Phyllis Blaser and Francis and Carolyn Arganbright, all of Waterville.

Very truly yours,

Jerry